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UNCLAS AMMAN 008580

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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: ANOTHER PRISON RIOT PRECEDES ABUSE TRIAL

REF: AMMAN 7959

SUMMARY

1. (U) Another riot at the Al-Juweideh correctional facility October 6 preceded the opening of the trial of eleven officers charged in connection with the September 1 death of an inmate (reftel). Violence erupted a third time at the prison October 12. End Summary.

MORE VIOLENCE AT AL-JUWEIDEH

2. (U) The local press reported another riot at the Al-Juweideh Correctional and Rehabilitation Centre in Amman October 6. According to the Jordanian Public Security Directorate (PSD), three brothers started the disturbance in reaction to the decision of prison authorities to transfer one of the inmates to another facility. A PSD official was quoted as saying the situation was brought under control within 30 minutes. Witnesses near the facility reported seeing official vehicles and PSD reinforcements pouring into the prison.

3. (U) According to press reports, violence again erupted at the facility October 12 as inmates reacted to the testimony from their colleagues exonerating the police officers accused of beating an inmate to death September 1. Prisoners set fire to their mattresses and dismantled their iron beds to use them as weapons. Interior Minister Samir Habashneh announced that iron beds at all correctional facilities would be replaced with concrete ones. 10 prisoners were reportedly hospitalized for minor injuries.

INTERNAL HEARING PRODUCES FRIENDLY WITNESSES

4. (U) Several inmates, including some that were injured September 1, testified at an internal PSD court proceeding that they saw no beatings or abuse by prison authorities during the September 1 riot. These witnesses claimed the injured parties "hurt themselves." Two of the beaten inmates testified that the authorities did all they could to prevent unnecessary use of force. Prison management claimed that the fatality was a result of wounds inflicted by other inmates.

5. (SBU) Asem Rababa, an attorney for the quasi-governmental National Center for Human Rights (NCHR), told PolOff October 14 that the October 12 disturbance occurred for two reasons: 1) prisoners were unhappy with alleged deals between prison managers and the witnesses to testify on behalf of the accused, and 2) prison management did not follow through with promises made to those inmates who testified. Rababa claimed that the two inmates injured during the September 1 riot and who provided exonerating testimony were released from custody a week prior to their appearance in court. Rababa said these two witnesses came to the NCHR and complained that they had actually testified against the defendants and were being misquoted.

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6. (SBU) Rababa attempted to attend the PSD proceedings, but was turned away. He informed PolOff October 14 that the judge refused his entry and requested that he receive permission to attend from the head of the PSD. Rababa then asked the PSD for authorization but was told that he must request permission from the judge. Rababa stated that according to regulations, PSD court proceedings are generally open to the public unless the presiding judge rules otherwise. No such ruling has been issued, and Rababa claimed he knew of no journalists that had access to the proceedings.

7. (SBU) Rababa spoke with lawyers participating in the hearing and said their general feeling was that the defendants would be found guilty. Rababa shared this opinion, but felt that the head of the PSD would reduce the sentences or prevent their implementation. (The PSD Director has

authority to modify internal court punishments.) According to Rababa, the three-judge panel and the prosecutor all work for the PSD.

HALE